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MORTARA

BY

MRS. HELEN ALDRICH DE KROYFT

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MORTARA

BY

MRS. HELEN ALDRICH DE KROYFT

I heard it in the breezes, and my heart shaped it out of the hoarse voices of the winds, — He will come again, he will come again!

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CAMBRIDGE
Printed at the Riverside Press
1887

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DEDICATION

Looking back through the years to all those who "in their lives" have been "lovely and pleasant" to me, my heart selects one too great to more than wear as a flower on her bosom the dedication to any work of mine; still, this is my soul's best, and, eager to do her ever so little reverence, here upon its whitest page I inscribe her name, —

Mrs. E. M. HARDY, *of Norfolk, Virginia,*

pausing the while to set it around with grateful memories; and so leave it in the world, like a thing of light, shining forever in its own unborrowed lustre.

PREFACE.

I HAVE lived much that I have not written, but I have written nothing that I have not lived, and the story of this book is but a plaintive refrain wrung from the overburdened song of my life; while the tides of feeling, winding down the lines, had their sources in as many broken upheavals of my own heart.

The day that I was a bride I was a widow; and finding me thus weeping and alone, the fates stole away the light from my eyes, leaving me henceon to walk with the angels, one on either hand; who, themselves guiding, brought me ere long to a rosy glen by the sea, where resided one of lofty mien and of speech and manner courtly. Much learning he had, and many tongues he spoke. The gathered lustre of all lands shone in the grace of his presence, as the charity that comes of knowing all religions lent a charm to his words, and added potency to the magic of his smile. But most he knew to heal a wounded heart, to dry away tears, and bring smiles in their

stead. Knew to gild with linings fair the clouds himself could not disperse; nor failed the subtlety of his art e'en to rally hope when hope was dead!

The name they named him by was goodly, ancient, and renowned. It was the name his Syriac fathers wore; and straight on down through long ancestral lines of warriors, kings, and princes, flowed the haughty Hebraic tides that crimsoned in his veins. Yet, of all his graces, modesty was the chiefest; nor ever boasted he of aught save that Honor was to him a ruling star, whose parallax held him ever to God and the right.

Such was Mortara, noblest of his line; and, having thus announced him, gentle reader, begging leave, I would fain introduce him to you as the heaven-appointed hero of my foreshadowed way.

MORTARA.

PART I.

New York, *March* 7, 1849.

Mortara, — But for these far-away flowers, still whispering of the orange groves and balmy breezes whence they came, I might mistake your letter for a delightful continuation of our last walk among those grand old trees by the Bay, when it seemed that the world itself, by some strange turn, had drifted around on a side that looked away toward heaven, and all of life had purpled into a dream too rich and too beautiful to last; when time, even, grew prodigal and sped the moments on golden wings as arm in arm we rustled through the falling leaves, rainbow-hued from the Tyrian dyes of autumn.

Ah! that morning, who can imagine it? and that walk, who can recall it? until, returning, we paused a little by the gate and one came running with those long-waited-for letters from your home beyond the sea.

"One is from my father," you said; and so, excusing yourself, you went to your room. My quick ear followed your tread, heard you lock the door, and I knew that you were alone with

the joys and sorrows of far-off loved ones breaking in saddened sweetness upon your exile heart.

Hurrying away from lunch that day I did not stop in the drawing-room as usual, wondering if, after having been so long oblivious to all around you, my humble self would ever be sought for or remembered again. Soon, though, a valet came with your card. Meeting me at the foot of the stairs, you said: —

"Would you like to climb the big hill this afternoon, or Mount Pisgah, as you call it?"

"Providing you will promise to spy out a Canaan for me there," I replied.

"Or one for myself, — would not that do as well?" was your quick rejoinder.

So, jocund and lively, we started; but on the way and after reaching the summit you were taciturn, as I thought, or too reflective, considering that you had invited me to walk with you. I had asked for all your home friends, of whom you seemed inclined to say little; and then, yielding to your spell, I too grew silent, and leaning my head back against the tree beneath whose shade we were sitting, I sought solace for the gorgeous scenes that lay around me by picturing brighter ones in heaven, and wondering if two dear eyes there were looking on me. Unconscious before how much the last few weeks had done to fade the memory of those two dear eyes from my heart, I was just beginning to reproach myself when very slowly and very solemnly you said: —

"No one has a right to count himself miserable who has not felt to his heart's core the branding sting of banishment. Then he may indeed pity Cain, and know at least how to sympathize with Satan himself. Exiled for the boyish offense of refusing to bear arms against the land of my mother, my friends were at first sanguine of procuring my return. Seventeen long years, though, have rolled away since that hope died from my soul, and I have since lived with the sole idea of amassing a fortune sufficient to bring my entire family and all my friends out of the country, and hold jubilee with them for at least six months or a year. But these letters today bring me word that my mother has become too feeble and my father too old and infirm even to journey to the line to meet me." Then, pausing a moment as if reflecting upon your disappointment, you turned full around to me and continued : —

"Yes, please God, this is henceforth to be my country and my home ; and will you, dearest, can you, be all to me on this side of the world ? I do not know when I began to love you, or how. I seem born to love you, to protect you, to care for you, and call you mine, and next to the pain of beholding my beloved parents no more is the thought of going away from here without you. I came back from New York ostensibly to await these letters, but in truth I returned only to pass a little time more with you, and then, perhaps,

take you away with me to Europe, and after meeting my friends, go to see Waltholl of Germany, and make him unveil the world again to those dear eyes of yours, — not that for the world I would ever wish myself to be less needful to your happiness than now, while certainly nothing in the world could ever make you more precious or more beautiful to me."

Oh ! how near heaven comes to us sometimes. That peaceful hill, crowned with evergreens and oaks, sung to forever by the breezes and mantled in sunshine, was Pisgah indeed ; and lo ! through the rifted clouds there came to me a very angel, bearing in his Abrahamic bosom the Canaan of rest, of home and peace and love, that my poor tired heart had longed for, ached for, and wept for, but never dared to hope for.

Ah ! Mortara, I almost wonder now that I did not fall down and worship you outright when, with your voice still faltering from bidding adieu to your long-cherished hope, you pledged to me not only the blessed largess of my soul's other, nobler self, but restored to me again my poor, broken, lost self, all radiant and new-born in the light of your love. Verily, were the past a desert and the future a tomb, that one memory were an oasis green and sunny enough to make it all an Eden ; for what mattered it to me then though mine eyes were veiled ? I had won you, than whom none wiser or nobler or more elegant walks the world, and away, too, from the brilliant

many. It was enough; and listen to me, Mortara, from that moment, from that golden hour that still spreads its autumn radiance through all my being, I have held you and your love only as one holds a solemn trust that may be remanded at any time.

All hope of any permanent provision being made for me has passed away. Those who would serve me have not the means, and those who could are robbed of the will, — perhaps by some wise angel who sees it better that I be not overblessed. Judge, then, how well I know the worth of these words from your far-away cabin, as you call it: —

"I ask only the happiness of bringing you here and living for you and you alone;" but, dearest Mortara, whatever comes, I can neither be yours nor allow you to befriend me. Indeed, by the very greatness of some blessings, our hearts are made to know that they are not intended for us, but sent only that we may look on them and learn self-denial.

You will be angry, but oh! chide me gently, for my heart is a bruisèd thing, and but for your letter to-day my every thought were mantled with despair. Since it came I have been walking and thinking of you until this whole place has grown warm and beautiful in the light of your loving presence, while in the heavy beating of the winds I hear again the roar of the waves and above them the words: —

"Cling to me; I shall save you or die with you!"

Oh, thou dearest, bravest, noblest, and best, how can I ever forget that terrible scene? And when at last the shore was reached and you lay there, your great heart panting for the life you had well-nigh given to save mine, what agony I endured rubbing those cold, dear hands and bathing them with my tears, praying you to live, to awaken and speak to me but once more!

Alas! my generous friend, what do I not owe you? My life and my heart surely. But though I had them and a thousand times more to bestow, I should still chide you for the doubts you persist in conjuring from that one little incident that so marred our last evening together and did me such infinite wrong. Suppose you were about to confide the one great secret of your life to my keeping and ask me again to go with you. I did not know your thoughts, or your intentions, although as if divining and answering them all I was just saying to myself: "It may not, cannot be," and instinctively withdrew my hand from yours and folded my arms across my breast, as if in all the dark world there was left only me. But when you turned and almost commanded me to explain the feeling, or the action, I wept, because it was just so much more than I could bear. My heart was too full, and the jostled tears rained down over my cheeks while you were cruel enough to neither let me hide them nor wipe them away.

Dear, noble Mortara, believe me, it was no thought of another nor doubt nor fear of you, whom I have tried so much not to love. I do love you, though, and now that you are so far away and I am writing you with my own hand, I do not blush to tell you so. Indeed, as two streams cannot flow in the same channel but the larger swallows up the lesser, so all the love my heart has ever known now winds and murmurs its music to you ; and while I would be generous enough to judge as I would be judged, a conscious lack of power to win and hold the love of one who has seen so much of the world and waded through the adoring glances of so many makes me fear lest, in my all-confiding and all-trusting simplicity, you find only solace for the loved and the lost. Is it so, or do I perchance owe all to your large pity that, like the mantle of generous Boaz, expanded and wrapped me in the moment we met?

The angels, though, do not hold out their hands to us longer than all day long, and lest I weary and turn away the only real one Heaven has vouchsafed me, I hasten, dearest, noblest Mortara, to say to thee, as ever, *Dominus tecum*, while I pray thee once more to write soon and come soon to Thy ever more than friend,

HELEN.

New York, *April* 7, 1849.

Mortara, — Madam S—— read me the thick sheet of your letter, and I replied to it as usual in her room, she often coming to look over my shoulder. But the thin one, designed for my heart alone, I reserved until Benoni came up last evening to take me to the opera and lent me his eyes for its precious perusal; and then again when we returned, as a kind of encore to *my* Salva, that his sweet strains might follow me into the dream-land!

Some good fairy must have visited your *cabin*, and, charmed with its occupant, turned it into a castle, since it can afford to set apart two such rooms for an imaginary guest and a dark maid to drape them with flowers in compliment to her fancied coming!

Oh! tell me, Mortara, do you really love me so, and am I indeed so verily with you? Your great heart, running over with that beautiful benignity that always warms in your words and melts from your eyes, makes your cabin or castle, whatever it be, seem to me nothing less than a little city of refuge from the world. Were I to rise up and fly to it, though, I should doubtless meet on the way, or far down by the gate, some angel of destiny with flaming sword turning

every way; for alas! Mortara, what you dream of can never, never be. No, like a planet wrapped in the meshes of a distant star, I am forever chained from thee; and though thy black eyes be windows to love's happy Eden, still I may never look into them; and though thine arms be indeed belts of gold and thyself a pillar of trust, still thy way is not my way. Ah, no, Mortara, in heaven I were nearer thee than now. As the stars cross paths, so from half a world away we have met and whispered words of love only for landmarks to our souls, forever seeking each other and God and the true.

You seem always half glad for the rough ways of life that you may help to bear some one over them. What wonder, then, that my weak soul should be forever longing to flee away and take shelter beneath the wings of thy might? But oh, Mortara, if there were no other obstacle, I could not be selfish enough to sombre all that should bring gladness to thee by linking the clouds of my sky to the sunshine of thine. And yet, when I remember that unlooked-for coming in of the tide when you so nobly risked life and all to save me, and again when you blistered those dear hands to save me from fire, I can only shut mine eyes and weep tears that I have not a hand like Providence to weigh out blessing to thee forever, forever!

But wait until you have visited R——. Perhaps you will find there that the angels have at

least let me turn your steps toward the beautiful and the good. Wait until you have seen my fascinating friend Elenore; if herself fails to charm you, her music surely will. Therefore, be sure to see her; and if you are not less gallant than I imagine, like Anthony at the banquet of Cleopatra, you will at least offer your heart for what your eyes do feast on!

Madam S—— is too lynx-eyed and too all-pervading not to have divined the struggle going on in my soul; and true to her avowed *penchant* for torture, she delights in telling me over and over how perfectly you and Miss Elenore are fitted for each other; even talks of your wedding, and seems to have put it all down in her own mind as a settled thing. Well, Miss Elenore is brilliant and beautiful, surely; and you, — ah! what shall I say? — noble and wise and good enough to have been the prophet seer at the gates of Zuph; which you were verily to me from the day of my entrance into that rosy glen by the sea, where, whether we walked, rode, or climbed the hills together, followed up the brooks or gathered shells by the sea, rowed our little bark out upon the waves or drifted along the murmuring shore, every day, every hour was to my soul but a fresh anointing from the storehouses of your knowledge. Indeed, hanging upon your eloquent lips I followed you over all lands, lingering now at one court and now at another; now treading along the art galleries

of Würtemberg, Berlin, Paris, Milan, Rome, and then away across the deserts to the beautiful Orient and the land of your fathers, whose Temple alone filled the world with its sacred grandeur and emblazoned all time with its holy splendors; until at last, all unaware, I sat communing with you up in the high places and breaking spirit bread with you upon the very house-tops of your love. What God would have He paves the way to; and I needed just that beautiful overlooking of the world through your eyes, and just this new strength in my soul that loving you has given me, as a kind of renunciatory blessing for the cold, isolate life that lies before me.

Dear, noble Mortara, I have never had courage to tell you how I know that our paths are never to be joined; yet I do know that the lines of my destiny have fallen too dark among the shadows for any one this side of heaven to bear me company through them.

I must make the journey sad and alone; and yet, dearest, not all alone, for wherever I go or whatever my lot is thou wilt be to me forever, as now, — though remote, yet never gone; though distant, yet always near. Alas! I have come to say my prayers, even, with my soul mantled in your love, and my thoughts commune with the angels in words that I have learned from your lips. Indeed, you are a part of me, my other, dearer, nobler self, and I can never, never,

never for one moment separate you from my thoughts, or ever, ever, ever tear your memory from my heart, over which I have set up your promise to be here soon like a bow of promise, watery with tears and purple with gladness. New York, though, is neither New Orleans nor Havana, both of which Benoni says you are to take in your way, and I fear you will find it dull here as well as cold; but oh! I am here, and when you come my heart will be here too, and summer and flowers, love and gladness, all of which follow in thy train, as I pray sweet *candida pax* to attend thee, and white-winged angels to stand forever thy watchful guard!

HELEN.

STONE COTTAGE, *July* 17, 1849.

MORTARA, — While the east is kindling with coming light and the dews are heavy on the mown grass, I have hurried me from happy dreams to bid you hasten to this sunny vale of meadows and groves where simply to live is blessing enough for all the day long, and at eve we will rock away upon the river or follow up its winding way, treading on the soft shadows of nightfall that come to sleep among the bushes and the flowers.

You entreat me to nevermore freeze you with the word friend; but oh! how talk to thee of love while to call thee friend is happiness so great? Yet think not that I doubt you, for, Mortara, I doubt nothing save my ability to make you happy.

Confidence is a plant of rapid growth when watered by the tears and dews of love. Beside, many moons have come and waned and all the seasons have changed since our friendship began, and by the light of the past we should surely judge something of the future. But oh! is it in man's nature, is it in his love, to be always thus unselfish and thus devoted? Might there not come days when the heart's dial would turn too slowly and the hours hang too wearily?

Tell me, thou dearest, noblest, and best; thou temple, priest, and oracle, speak and I will trust thee! Where thou art not, loneliness is in thy place; no voice like thine, no arm so dear; and as the day makes us forget the night, so thou drivest all gloom from my thoughts.

Yet, dearest, loving thee is selfish, and my heart chides the love it cannot help. I could leave all for thee, but oh! leaving all I should leave thee too, for they who forsake duty may take no good thing with them.

Alas! Mortara, even at the risk of your ridicule, I must tell you that five summers ago, sitting amid the dazzling beams of the sun, and every thought broad awake with the stirring excitements of school, a kind of hallucination or momentary *vision* passed before me, wherein I myself saw myself journeying through what seemed ages upon ages of darkness, — darkness that blotted away everything and then took on a shape of its own that rose up before me like an old time-worn Cheops, only a million times more vast, stretching its top away into the blackness of the sky, while its base rested dark on the earth and filled me with an indescribable fear. Still, impelled by an influence that I could not resist, I steadily approached the forbidding presence and found countless little circles of gold shining through its gloomy surface. Only their tiny creased edges were visible; yet moved by the same impelling force that had brought me

within their reach, very timidly I fell to picking them out with one hand and dropping them into the other. Slowly, one by one, I was picking them out with the right hand and dropping them into the left, when straightway all sweet plans for the dear ones in this cottage home began to run through my thoughts, and, as it seemed, absorbed the gold, or bore away the shining little pieces from my hands almost faster than I was able to gather them. So on, on, through what seemed weary ages, I myself saw myself patiently gathering, gathering, but never possessing. Always moving, too, or going, going, as it seemed, with the same old overawing, world-like presence forever bent above and around, until all at once the gold ceased on the side of it toward me, and in its stead came quantities of a dark green material in lumps, rolls, or bunches that only possession, or taking in my hands, made golden. Of that, too, I gathered as before, gathered, gathered, wandered, toiled, and gathered, until at last the dark green material also disappeared, the base only whence it rose remaining green — when farther in toward the heart of the gloomy old presence the gold shone out again; but this time, instead of shining little pieces as at first, it came in squares like tablets or slates, standing on their edges and so tightly wedged together that it seemed impossible ever to move them. Yet I touched them and they came out to me; myself seemed to draw them as by a kind of

right, and whereas all before had merely passed through my hands, now all remained with me; and when I had folded in my arms as much as I could well carry, with something like the pride of possession warming in my thoughts, I journeyed on, on again; but in a new direction now and faster than before, the old overawing shape the darkness had taken on no longer keeping pace. Finally, reaching a height that seemed to overlook the future as well as the past, I espied far out in the distance a break in the great dome of night, and thence a little wave of soft sweet light rolling toward me. Faster it came and larger it grew, spreading out upon the fleeing clouds until it seemed that heaven itself had opened, and all its glories were beaming above and around me. Then I turned and saw one standing apart with downcast eyes, and of face and mien such as I had never looked on, — one who made no sign, spoke no word, his knowledge of or companionship to the long dark way I had been coming seeming rather self-conveyed, whereat the *vision* ended and all was the same to me as before.

Now call it a *vision*, or call it what you will, in the few twinkling seconds of its duration, with every sense barred to the outer world, led by some unknown law of our being, I was away, away, following down the deep-drawn lines to my own destiny. Look! hardly two years had elapsed when Death robbed my young life deso-

late, and over the new-made grave by which I stood and mourned a moon rose swift upon my sky that was to watch even itself turned into blackness; and ere it waned I awoke but to find the sun, moon, and stars indeed gone down forever, and the clouds of a relentless night fallen cold and thick around me.

Thus on the great clock of fate my destiny had been marked, exactly as foreshadowed to me in the *vision* whose haunting shades I have invoked until nearly every phase of it has unveiled to my soul its fullest meaning.

First, the everywhere towering old pillar-like presence, that might have been let down from the clouds or piled up from the ages of the ages, was but a gloomy symbol of the world, or what the world was to be to me in the darkness, — *an everywhere towering, forbidding presence*, just as I have found it; and all the more towering and forbidding, too, because of the gold shining so dimly through its gloomy surface.

In God's own good time, though, those mystic little circles will not only appear, but the means for gathering them also be provided; and possibly the little book that I wrote you about is to have something to do with it. Do you see? Although no Aladdin lamp to the world, it may still prove to my hand the coveted, wand-like "Open Sesame!" At all events, as the darkness of the *vision* and the two scenes preceding it have so strangely come to pass, so all that

seemed to grow out of them is to be translated in the sternest reality upon the years of my life. I know it, I see it, and when I have explained to you the nature of those plans that ran so mystically through my thoughts and absorbed the little golden pieces almost faster than I was able to gather them, you will be convinced that, although "a day of no open vision," there must be still those in heaven mighty enough to trail before mortal eyes shadows of the events themselves are forging.

But oh! would that you or some one might turn seer indeed, and divine to my longing soul the closing scene, when the heavens opened and all their pent-up glories broke again upon my enraptured soul. Yes, where, oh, where in all the dark confines of time sleeps that dawn for me? or must I indeed look for it beyond the sunset and beyond the shadows? Alas! God only knows.

But, Mortara, thou noblest and best, whatever that *vision* was, after having lived it over and over in my thoughts and traced and retraced through it my dark foreshadowed way, I know that the angels have placed this in their books even as they have *bottled my tears:* in this world we are never to be one; no, never, never, never. What is to be no hand may stay, and despite the veiled eyes and the helplessness that now girts me around, there is a foreshadowed something in the world for me to do, — a some-

thing that will take long, long years, — years of loneliness and weariness and anxiety, and ere my work is done I shall be no more what I am.

Here, then, waiting to meet thee, I part with thee, as in this life I have parted from all bright things ; parted from them, alas ! only the brighter to bear them on in my thoughts, just as in the soul's beautiful ideal the star of thy love will be forever rising over my heart and shedding its pale light along the lonely future.

HELEN.

PART II.

New York, *December* 4, 1849.

Mortara, — Oh, tell me, did I then after all promise to be thine, thine, all thine, forever thine? Ah! how memory reproaches while my poor heart coaxes fear to silence.

But, mine own beautiful and best, you will surely wait for me the two years, or until the love-work foreshadowed in the *vision* is ended. That lies next to my hope of heaven, and you must surely leave me to accomplish it. Not even if you could furnish the means to effect the same end would it be the same thing to me. No, I must live for it, toil for it, and pray for it, and so do at least a part of what they who watch in heaven have called me to do; and then, dearest, noblest Mortara, may our Heavenly Father forgive the rest while I go to be happy with love and thee, happy with the one being in the world whose radiant image lies glassed so deep in my soul that, whether dreaming or waking, by the star of love I forever behold him there!

It was weakness, I know; but in that awful moment when you held the world in such frightful array on the one hand, and yourself, your love, your devotion, and your dear open arms on the other, it was just as impossible not to fly to

you as it is always impossible not to love you. The angels witnessed our pledges and wrote them down, mayhap with smiles and mayhap with tears — God only knows. You have two years, though, to take back your part of them in if you choose, and certainly no one in heaven or out of it could have the hardihood to blame you.

I have received the ring set with a star and covering the words: "Speravi in te;" and while my heart chides me I wear it, dearest, the rich covenant of thy love, and would I could circle thy life in a sky as starry and as golden! Would for one hour, even, I might round such brightness upon thy way as thou thyself bringest to me! Thou art the Sun, with my Venus heart transiting about thee. Thou the star, with my soul empaled upon the shining disc of thy love, the where thy smiles make the morning, and thy whispers and thy kisses dewy evenings, rosy and star-lighted like visions in love's happy dreams.

Now I forgive the angels the hiding away of the day since, themselves guiding, they brought me to thee. But alas! how ever repay the wealth of thy love? What vial add to the stream of thy happiness, what care lift from thy heart, or what burden help thee to bear? Oh! nothing, nothing! I am dependence' self, and through life long I can only hang upon thy dear arm, trusting all to thy guidance sweet, as erst I clung to thee for life amid the waves of the sea.

When wandering far from Eden's sunny bowers, had the love angel called after beautiful Eve and bade her return to Paradise and its streams and its flowers, she had not crept back more timidly to its Orient gate than comes my heart to such happiness and thee. Ah! Mortara, it is bliss to trust thee and it is heaven to love thee. Forgive all, then, and "Thy God shall be my God, and whither thou goest I will go."

May thy years be many and their seasons all golden autumns, rich in purple clusters and garnered delights! The love angels watch thee and bear me word soon that thou art well and happy! HELEN.

New York, *December* 27, 1849.

Mortara, — Saturday morning I walked with Minnie to hear your celebrated Rabbi from England; and when, toward the close of his eloquent discourse, he came to dwell with rapture upon Israel's final return to Jerusalem and Judea, and with tears pressed home the trespasses of the people in the lands of their sojourn, I could think of nothing but Ezra mourning before the house of God over "the strange marriages."

O Mortara, I never understood it so before, and I came away from the synagogue determined that you should never look on me again. But, dearest, as God sees things, it cannot be so wrong for you to wed a Christian. We both believe in Him and trust in the same blessed Messiah — do we not? Beside, how be parted from you now, Mortara, and live? My life is in you, and, like the earth, my heart could do without all the stars save its one true Polar star, whose loving beams my thoughts have learned to go to for jewels to deck themselves in, while my soul puts them on for bracelets and wears them for smiles.

Thy letter of to-day is a sweet Sychar of hope, and like a devout pilgrim I have encamped by it with the new best song of love warm on my lips.

Ah! yes, and would the slow turning moons that lie between had come and waned and I were indeed with thee in the land of flowers, where, thou sayest, those dark maids wait my coming; where all the breezes are heavy with perfumes, and, more than all, thy noble self forever near.

Oh! if the picture so entrance, the reality may be likened only to thee; for thyself art bliss, thyself art joy. So I trust thee, and so, dearest, I believe thee; while loving thee fills the days with gladness, and calling thee mine robs life of all save delight. One doubt were death; but oh! no, no, thou wilt be true. Thy chivalrous vows hang belted around my heart like rainbows upon a summer sea, forever covenanting anew the sweet springtimes and the glad harvests of thy love.

But, alas! how reply to thy chidings, when blame, for lack of care to one's self, is so sweet from lips that we love? Pray, dearest, have no fears. I rode much when the day was brighter to me than now, and Benoni says that I sit a horse still like a Cossack. Beside, I keep in mind — dost see? — those ponies and those gallopings with thee over the plains, shaking the dews from the drowsing flowers and hieing the birds to their matins of the morn.

Coming for me soon? Oh, no, no! What I go to do is scarcely more than commenced, and were I to play deserter to it now, turning to the books they keep, the good angels could do

naught but weep tears over the page whereon all *the foreshadowed* should have been writ. Beside, the moons vowed to your dear mother's memory make a long line upon the calendar yet, and I shall doubtless not only have ample time for all that to my hand has been set, but occasion for not a few lessons in waiting!

However, spread wide now those great protecting arms of thine, whose shelter a weary angel might covet; while, with prayers for thee all whispered in love, and kisses for thee melting in smiles and dissolving in tears, I come once more to chain thy heart around, as I would fain bind thy soul to mine forever, with love cords, many stranded here, and hawser laid in heaven.

HELEN.

New York, *January* 7, 1850.

Mortara, — Benoni has just forwarded your letters by the last steamer, and as there were none among them bearing your revered father's seal and handwriting we fear much lest the places that knew him behold him no more; and as his days have been so very long upon the earth, it is surely not impossible. Still, dearest Mortara, you are not left without comfort. The name of thy noble father is written with those whom the Lord has called His own; and instead of mourning any longer here the absence of his beautiful first-born, he will be waiting for you in a life beyond the grave that beatifies and restores the loved and the lost.

But for fear of this new great sorrow to you I should be very, very happy this evening, for like Ossian I see the stars from out the watery clouds and they tell me of thee, dearest, and happiness in the long years to come. Your last letter, too, is lying spread out here before me like a balmy little June all freighted with blossoms and laden with love. Through Minnie's eyes I have been looking down its roseate lines and whispering prayers that the years of thy life be thus all linked with sunshine and flowers.

Mortara, thyself alone art riches evermore, and

thy love "a light at evening time" that covers all my night with stars. Wonder not, then, that I almost fear to call thee mine, lest having so much I make the angels jealous and they come for thee, too.

Alas! Heaven's loudest complaint to mortals is ever for lack of love. Even He who sitteth upon the Throne of thrones knoweth what it is to stretch out His arms in the utter desertion of no one to love Him, no one to seek Him, and no one to fear Him, — "no, not one." Then as we may best show our love to Him by loving one another, is it not well, dearest, that thou shouldst begin by loving me just ever so little? Ah! yes, and like the ambitious vine do thou reach out all thy tendril thoughts to what is *nearest*, the while aspiring to the oak or the pine of a loftier trust, even the faith of Abraham that was accounted unto him for righteousness.

I shall not complain if all my angels go to keep you company so long as they help you to give such encouraging accounts of yourself as this: —

"I am reading the New Testament, love, for your sake, and I say my prayers sometimes in the little book that you gave me."

Oh! continue to do so, mine own beautiful and best, and let my prayers be answered: that you come at last to read them both for your own sake. I often wonder how one who has read Moses and the Prophets from his youth up, overlooked Jerusalem from holy Olivet and bleeding

Calvary, lingered in Gethsemane and knelt and wept amid the ruins of the Temple, can still doubt, save it be indeed as Paul says of his countrymen : —

" God hath given them the spirit of slumber."

You are thinking that quotation too pertinent, coming from me, and it does seem a little brusque and incongruous, surely ; but you know my thoughts come always linked hands rustling in upon me, the bidden and the unbidden together ; and if sometimes, as now, one perchance strayeth to thy side garmented unfitly, do thou let the trembling little offender find pity in thy sight and come away wrapped close in the fault-covering garb of thine own beautiful forgiveness !

Dearest, noblest Mortara, the Eunomian hours of this long winter evening seem just made for visiting with you in, and mine hostess soul has been working sweet miracles on the few little love words in your letter until they spread out into a feast that the unloved world might come in and sit down to. This choice bit of a *morceau*, though, my heart is selfish enough to sit up and feed on all by itself, marveling the while at the sweet healing it hath for wounded pride and blighted hope : —

" If your dependence, as you term it, be not a new grace, then your angels must surely have lent you their charms wherewith to conceal it."

How beautiful of you to say that, Mortara ; and I wonder, too, if angel or mortal ever enter-

tained thought or smile of love more loftily unselfish than this: —

"The landscape of your life has indeed been darkened over with shadows; but you should be content since Heaven, like a skillful artist, has made yourself not only sunny enough to dispel them from your own heart, but to banish them from the hearts of your friends also. Beside, I have often looked on my resolute *Iolantha*, and wondered if she ever could have been half as enchanting to me without her privation."

Oh, strange fatality! that all the stars in my sky should have been darkened o'er that the heaven-lighted aurora-borealis of thy love might shine the brighter upon my life, and I be crowned with the glory of calling thee mine. But the fates are not wont to give so much more largely than they take; and oh! thou more bright than the stars and more dear than the light, tell me, has the world grown Eden again and do the skies rain gladness that my poor heart may drink it as from rivers that never run dry? Alas! when love hath most, then most it doubts; and O Mortara, bend now thy beautiful head and tell me once again in whispers that the angels might pause a little on their harps to listen for, art thou indeed mine and I thine, and I to live with thee ever, ever? I to lean upon thine arm, gather joy from thy lips, and follow down all the sunset paths of life guarded by thy watchful eye and shielded by thy tender hand?

. . . . . .

New York, *January* 17, 1850.

Mortara, — Those letters must have been the bearers of good news instead of unwelcome, as I feared, or they had surely reached you ere this; for good journeyeth to the good on foot, while evil flieth to them.

So mine own far away begs to know more of myself, more how I pass the days, and almost complains that my pen should be so chary of the progress I am making; but results are greater apart from the steps that lead to them, and while men praise success they laugh at effort without it. Better then, dearest, you be content to know that all the days are full of toil and all my thoughts full of dreams of thee.

The little book is really out, though, and flying hither and thither like leaves among the Autumn winds, as the papers ere this must have told you. Fears for the world's reception of one's first work are fearful indeed, while the relief of finding it praised and not criticised is after all but another name for torture, lest the feat of slaying so timid a thing as your one little *ewe lamb* of a book might not have been deemed Herculean enough for the majesty of their pens! However, so long as many are pleased, many come to congratulate, and the far and near hasten for-

ward their orders, one need not quarrel with the wherefore, I ween.

A group of new faces, too, are smiling over their desks this morning in a far-away school. A pretty little banking institution — dost see? — for absorbing the tiny gold dollars that come to me now, just as, you remember, the sweet plans that ran through my thoughts in the *vision* bore away the shining little pieces from my hands almost faster than I was able to gather them. I promised, though, to afflict you no more with the shades of that "gloomy superstition," as you call it; but, Mortara, as well go back and convince Belshazzar that the handwriting his eyes saw traced upon the wall was but a freak of his own imagination, as persuade me that my five summers' ago noonday panoramic vision of darkness was not a forecast of the stern events that have since been and are still to be crowded upon the years of my life. Judging by the past, too, mine is to be no flowery way, and now passing out these gates[1] I do perchance enter anew the gate of tears. But, Mortara, with love and thee shut up in my heart I can brave all and endure all.

I must go to Washington, though. What I have undertaken can never be accomplished unless I do. Myself and my little love-work received and smiled upon there, the wide, wide world will be open before me.

[1] N. Y. B. Institute.

Now your black eyes are frowning again, I fear, but alas! what is to be one has a tendency to; and in spite of all I can do my thoughts will come and go faced toward the wanderings of that lonely *vision* or wide-awake, twinkling second of a dream "that was not all a dream!"

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PART III.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February* 8, 1850.

MORTARA, — Your letter needed no orange blossom or aught else to atone for the slowness of its coming, since it leaves me nothing to forgive and little to forget save the pain of not hearing from you. Indeed, portraying as it does both the sorrow you are enduring and the efforts you are making for your friends beyond the sea, blame should rather be to me, I fear, for having borne with so little grace this — my first lack of a word from you.

But alas! love is ever selfish; and now, while regretting most sincerely David's call to leave his Almah and go half a world away, I find myself rejoicing that the *lot* fell not on thee, dear, dear Mortara. Oh! no, no, the thought is woe, and with tearful thanks I hide it from me. David's noble self-sacrifice, going in Phanor's place, is one of those holy things out of heaven which, like Jacob's ladder, lead mortals so near to that blissful abode that we may well charge him to have care for himself lest those who mourn his absence behold him no more. Please press my love in a kiss upon sweet Almah's lips and say to her that while Helen lives she shall never lack a sister.

The little book goes on turning to gold as if all the good genii had touched it; the papers continue to praise, and my heart would know only joy this morning, Mortara, but for the tears I know sorrow and loneliness are circling around yours. Even if you had not named the great bereavement of your noble father's sudden death, I should have felt it in every line of your precious letter — so softly you take up the words and so tenderly you lay them down, like one folding away hopes to be fostered no more and pressing kisses upon mute lips that may part to whisper blessing and love in return no more, nevermore! Oh! mine own beautiful and best, how near it makes heaven seem to hear you say: "He cannot come to me, but I shall go to him," — as though with your own blessed hand you had turned back the clouds and marked the shining way leading up even to the New Jerusalem with its golden streets and walls of sapphire.

Mortara, you must not despair. "God is great, God is good," and for the sake of His covenant with your princely fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whose blood purples in your veins down through thousands of years, He will never leave nor forsake you; and more than all, One whom you have not yet learned to love has whispered to every bereaved heart: "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Even as He stood and

wept over Jerusalem, so now He waits to cover you with His blessing, fill your heart with His love, and banish every care from your thoughts.

Oh! that I could light just one new joy for you, or scatter flowers for just so much as one footprint! Ah! that one footprint, so it were faced toward me, how I would fly now to gather it up as though an angel had left it in the world, and fold it to my lonely heart for a thing more dear and more precious than the crown of a king — as I have over and over again these sweet assurances that whatever comes or whatever betides there is always left to me the sure refuge of thine own loving arms. Blessed words, precious words! And oh! thou noblest and best, repeat them, till like lights upon a dark shore they guide me back to thee again. Ah! yes, dearest, dry thy tears and stay thy sighing, if only the while to write me once again with thine unceasing love winding and cascading adown the lines.

But forgive me, Mortara, I have asked of thee a song with *the streams of Babylon at thy feet*, and thy dear far-off home dark with mourning. Oh! send me tears, then, that I may weep with thee and for thee till the love angel touch again thy heart. Meantime, trusting all to thine unchanging word, I return thy "one tearful kiss" with a thousand little sunny isles of them in a sea of love, and barks on all its waves heavy laden with blessing. HELEN.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *March* 20, 1850.

MORTARA, — Hours are long on the dial of a waiting heart to which love turns wicked sprite, lengthening the moments even into cycles of endurance. Pray, is it because so many are showering blessings that thy dear hand must be stayed from writing me?

I leave in the morning for Charleston, the city of palmettoes and the home of love and flowers. Washington, dear, noble Washington, has marked the way and set it along with lights and friends. But oh! how I long to leave all and fly to thee, thou ever first remembered and latest in my thoughts.

Dearest, noblest Mortara, oh! fold me in thine arms and let me but one moment hide from the world that I so constantly dread. Alas! is there no refuge? Must I go, must I? I do wrong though, to be thinking of myself when you have perhaps to-day parted from your dear, noble brother forever, and his poor sweet Almah weeping tears with no hand but yours to dry them away. I can feel the loneliness that weighs down her desolate heart, and would I could comfort her. But alas! this world was made to break hearts in, while love was sent from heaven to heal them. The precious balm, though, is so

scarce that many must die for want of it. Woman's heart at least is seldom cordialed, save with her own tears, and they as often drown as cure.

Mortara, thy love alone should brighten the world, though banished the sun. Why, then, is my heart dark and lonely? Oh! thou, my star, art too distant. Thy letters, though, abound in beautiful praise, and this in thy last was precious indeed: —

"I am proud of my noble Helen." Ah! had these words been sent to me oracled from the lips of Fame herself I were less pleased and less proud, and love has so engraven them upon my heart's memory that they will brighten there with the last wave of time. You are my world and I have earned your applause. Enough! and yet I ask for more — courage to persevere. I dread all, everything. I am afraid even of my own thoughts, and every footfall makes my heart start like a sleeping criminal. O Mortara, Mortara, will I hear from you in Charleston? Though all the city come out to meet me and the angels themselves walk linked hands, a letter from you there will be to my soul a bubbling fountain in a desert, a voice in the wilderness, or a white hand from out the clouds. If no more love to send, then tell me, dearest, whither you go and what you do. Tell me if Almah is inconsolable, and let me share as much as possible what pains and what pleases you.

These flowers bring you my tears and my kisses. I received them last night at the good President's levee, who has this evening sent me a letter that bends a golden canopy over all the dark and lonely way.

Once again, fare thee well, mine own dear, true Mortara. I shall love thee when the stars are old, and come storm and cloud, or come what may, next to our Heavenly Father, my trust is in thee. My heart is wedded forever to thine, and parted from thee I but love thee more and pray for thee oftener.

One fond embrace from thy dear arm, while I steal a kiss from thy dear lips, a smile from thy black eyes, and a curl from thy jetty locks.

Ah! why this shadow upon my heart and this vague consciousness of every day drifting farther and farther away from you! But alas! I cannot drive it away, nor stop nor turn back. No, no. I must go, I must, I must!

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PART IV.

New York, *May* 9, 1850.

Mortara, — It is the deep night-time, — the hour I know not; but oh! I cannot sleep when I remember that to-morrow, oh! to-morrow, I speak with you and go out from your heart to return no more, nevermore! Already my soul has crucibled its woe beyond the bitterness of tears, and henceforth life is all endurance, — cold, hopeless, loveless endurance. Oh! to-morrow, to-morrow! Shall I never meet you again? Never hear your voice? Will you never, never, never come to call me yours again?

These night chills do not so freeze me as the loneliness that now, like a cold mist, is falling on my head and sinking down into my heart.

Seven moons ago I gave you the love of my soul for the wealth of yours; and now when I cancel your vows and tear myself from you, as well for your good as my own, my heart claims you by a price a thousand times greater and a thousand, thousand times paid.

Mortara, forgive me; but vows are on my lips to the dead by which I should never, never have promised to be your wife, — vows which nothing but love for you could ever have made me forget. Not fear of the world, nor poverty, nor

pain, nor death; but oh! to live with you, to be yours, I would almost have forgotten heaven itself. But to-night, in this desolate hour, I would wring from my soul the last vestige of its idolatry. I know my duty. I see what lies before me, — a sacrifice of not only the two little years that I begged of you, but many years, a lifetime, perhaps; and O God! help me that I fail not, and keep me that I turn not back!

Dearest, noblest Mortara, my love for you began in gratitude; it has grown in esteem, and though I part from you now, oh! blame me not, nor darken these pure feelings with words of wrong; but like gentle rivulets let them run on, that when the day is weary and the water in the bottle is spent, their murmuring memories may be to my fainting heart like the voices of the angels whispering of hope. No, no, Mortara, blame me not. It is no selfishness that moves me to write you as I do. I leave happiness and thee but for toil and danger; for long years of loneliness, and weariness, and darkness everywhere. I bless you for all your love, I bless you for all your devotion; and could I weigh happiness from my life I would gladly crowd yours with length of years and bliss such as mortals never know.

I have no tears, and beyond the morrow no hope. When you have read this you will write me; but oh! say not that you love me, lest I leave all and fly to you; and oh! say not that

you hate me lest it drive me mad. But, Mortara, remember me and pity me. Leaving you, I leave all the world. You will believe that I love you less and my people more, but oh! no, no. My duty is to them; and since I may not live to love you, God be praised that I have a smiling little troop of loved ones, to live for! Striving to weed the garden of their young lives will be the surest way of planting flowers in the desert of my own. So even they and you and everything go to make up the finger of Providence that forever points me away, away to the lonely wanderings of that fated *vision* which, ere you read this, my feet will have entered upon nevermore to tarry, nevermore to turn back, and nevermore to weary, I hope, until the end is reached and the morning breaks again upon these veiled eyes of mine.

Forgive me, then, Mortara, and most of all forgive me if I have wronged you. But our spirits divine some things and come to read them all the plainer ere they have reached the form and substance of words; and I am persuaded that either some untoward event growing out of your noble father's death, or the same great enterprise that called your brother far, far away, calls also you and you would be free. I know it, I feel it; and saying these words to you, Mortara, I do but give utterance to what has been all along distancing the night of my life from the morning of yours. Is it not so? Oh, go

then; and may the God of your fathers send His whitest angels to guard and keep you! And if in far-off years we meet again, I shall love to give you my hand over the deep grave of the past and feel that, as now, you do at least respect me.

Farewell, Mortara. What I feel is not woe, it is not madness, it is not grief; words may never, never speak it. Oh! was desolation ever so drear? Was loneliness ever so lonely? And oh! was duty ever so severe?

Alas! the world is indeed dark before me, while thou, my soul's light, goest from me. And oh! how make you believe, dearest Mortara, that I thus *will* to part hands and stay from you only to be the more worthy of loving you and the surer of finding you again? How make you know that but for the certainty of wrong to you, wrong to myself, and wrong to all linked hands with us both, naught this side of heaven could move one thought of mine to the step I am taking so long as you had a smile for me left?

But oh! thus it was ever death for me to love, and I linger now as at the gate of Paradise with only this one more word to thee trembling on my lips, — farewell, Mortara, forever and forever fare thee well. HELEN.

PART V.

BANGOR, ME., *June* 27, 1852.

MORTARA, — Like the rivers, forever running yet never passed, like the winds, forever going yet never gone, so is my love for thee; and now, after two long weary years, your welcome letter is as if the angels had lifted the leaden hand of despair and suddenly turned a thousand rivulets of joy into this desert heart of mine. Your lips have but whispered my name, and lands and seas are widening between us no more. You reach out your hand to enfold mine in its clasp, — I hear your voice, and all my clouds are beaming with light; my stars shine again in the heaven of your smile, and my morning new dawns in the paradise of your love.

Oh! nothing less than a leaf from the book of life could I prize so much as this, your precious letter. I could live upon its words a thousand years, and feast hope forever upon its dreams of love, — love all high and holy, binding souls as with the "sweet influence of the Pleiades" that no power may sever them; love that came from the skies and in the lute of thy voice awoke my heart to its Elysian advent of song and ambrosial joys. But alas! dearest Mortara, only in the spirit world mayest thou

ever be mine and I thine. There, beneath those soft skies, I may at least mark whither thy wings take their flight and watch thy return, as now I do miss thee everywhere and wait for thee and pray for thee. But, though parted from you in this world, I would still forever wear the jeweled mantle of thy love, and have all thy soul's life to bless mine with. Oh! a thousand, thousand times a day I envy the soul part of me that puts on wings and flies to you, not to your embrace, but to look on you from afar, envying the while even the shadow that walks by your side and the voices of the winds because they mingle with yours. Ah! yes, but for the fear of Heaven, long, long ago, a thousand, thousand times ago, I had left all and followed you into those golden climes. But, Mortara, astray from duty I were farther from you there than here, where, like the compass upon the sea, my heart beats on the truer the farther from the haven, and the firmer for the cloud and the storm.

It is in the soul that we love. It is my spirit that weeps and is lonely without you; and from my deep heart I bless you for these dear, dear words of to-day, showing me how manifold richer are they who find again than they who have never lost. Oh! this precious letter! I spread it out before me, and it is a vale more sunny and more beautiful than the longing eye of Israel's prophet saw. I wind its lines around my heart and they are rainbows too golden to

fade away. I press it to my lips; I wear it over my heart; I set it up in my thoughts for a temple light that goeth not out. This dear letter, — Heaven bless it, Heaven be praised for it! although forced to read in it o'er and o'er of Mortara saved by letting Mortara go. Was it not so, thou wayward knight? But did I blame you then, or do I blame you now? Oh! never, never. My love robes you in all that is high and holy, and is so like heaven that it asks no return save thy heart! When asking and expecting least, though, one oft most receives, and lo! now from half a world away I am wearing a chain again new-forged from your love and new-jeweled with your praises of me, — a chain whose links even I had thought broken and lost, so loosely you wore it away now two summers agone. Verily, an artificer like unto the Tubal-cain of old must have come to your aid, else each loop, rivet, and hook could ne'er have been refastened so fair. No, Mortara, a necromancer thou art, and by the magic of thine own words:

"It takes two to break an engagement," the beautiful past is evoked, and all the ties that bound us twain are binding us still. But oh! thou dearest, noblest, and best, if it does indeed take two to break an engagement, then it must surely take two to keep one; and henceforth, while I send you in the silvery horn of each waning moon my prayers, my love, and my tears, I pray you to remember that absence and years

are cold things to wrap and lay away the heart in. Ah! yes, and how precious and how beautiful of you to say: —

"Let silence no longer bar the tomb to our separation, and, please God, some day I shall return."

Oh! how surely Heaven hears us when we pray; and here, even here, my heart has builded an altar and lighted thereon the fires of a brighter faith in the beautiful beyond.

In some far time, Mortara, far back in a life that we have lived before, our spirits must have met and bowed and sipped together at the same spirit wells of thought and feeling; else why, oh! why, our strange dreamlike recognition here? I could not see you, yet your presence lighted all my soul as with the sweet aurora of remembered smiles; while your voice, your words even, broke upon my ear like the echoes of some far-lost, love-betraying Shibboleth; until, listening entranced, I could almost have named you by a name borne to my lips on a tide of reawakened memory. Then, half around that little lake, — dost remember? — you paused, and exclaimed: —

"Why, it seems I have been waiting and looking for some one like you all my life, and I am half vexed now with those angels you speak of for not bringing you to me sooner." The next morning, too, by the Cocoa Spring, stooping to fill that tiny cup for me, you said: —

"Were this bubbling fountain in my own country I should fancy my parents must have encamped by it while on some pilgrimage in my infancy, I am always so haunted here with something like forgotten voices and faded memories;" when only the evening before I had said to one of the ladies: —

"I must have visited this spot some time in the dreamland, the gurgling of the waters and all about it comes back to me so strangely." Thus, like happy children, we grew to be acquainted by forgetting that we were strangers, or rather by discovering, as it seemed, that even the shadowy memories and fancies of our souls had some time or other fallen together; and as we went on, reliving to each other our separate lives, what wonder that we found such new interest in each event now that, like a long divided page, the two halves of our one life were joined again! All too soon, though, the great clock of Fate struck another, sadder hour, and knelled out our paths henceon in opposite directions. A sea of time rolled between, an icy sea mayhap, whose dark waves must needs be crossed and recrossed many times. But if the destinies of our souls be indeed one, we shall ere long surely meet again. At all events, dearest Mortara, let us be patient and never weary well doing, that although parted in this life we may finally come to rest together in the bosom of our Heavenly Father whose love melteth his sorest bereave-

ments into blessing. Oh, no, no! thou dearest, noblest, and best, weary not, and oh, — may I ask it? — forget me not. And when nothing brighter in the world comforts you, remember that far, far away one loves you a thousand, thousand times more than her own life, and would gladly give all for you and leave all for you save God and heaven, — and heaven were scarcely heaven save you were in it.

I love you, Mortara. In my thoughts I love you, in my prayers I love you, and in my grief and in my tears I remember you. Oh! while one spark of my soul remains, that one spark will be the brighter for its memory of you; while the joy I have in your prosperity is equaled only by the love-lighted castles I build upon the hope of your return. HELEN.

New York, *November* 27, 1852.

Mortara, — As the ocean in the distance is joined to the sky, so this hour, half a world away, my spirit is blending its light and its love with thine; and the angels are listening while I assure thee, dearest, that the throbbings of the sea are not more true to the earth, whose bosom she sleeps upon, than is my soul to thee.

Oh! come forth and look into the stars to-night, and behold my smile for thee. Listen to the low-breathing waters, and they will tell thee of me, — how I wait for thee, how I watch for thee, and how I think of thee, and how I pray for thee ever, ever!

Mortara, I see again, oh! I see again. The world is growing glad and new; but this same bright world, Mortara, I would give to gaze one moment on you. The sun, the moon, the rivers, and the green fields and the blue sky are breaking through the mists. Joy has returned, hope has returned, but oh! you come not, you come not; and though I watch for you until the day hangs weary on the world, and though I sleep and dream of you, still you come not, you come not! Oh! why, why, with all other bright things, may you not come to smile on me now? The angels, with love-dews fresh on their dappling

wings, alone know how my eyes look for thee everywhere, — in every cloud, in every shadow, and in every form that comes and goes; and how I watch for thy smile in the twinkling stars, in the soft moon, and everything that has light and love in it.

Oh! the soul is not a thing to be bridled. We cannot rein our thoughts whither we would; and mine, alas! are lingering ever with you. My heart throbs at the very word letter, and every footfall but echoes back the memory of yours; and wander where I will, as in a happy dream, I am forever with you, — your smiles still warm on my heart and your whispers still dear on my lips. Alas! no, what one is one cannot help. We cannot tear hence our feelings, and sink them root and branch into the sea of forgetfulness, nor strangle the hopes nor choke away the desires of our souls; and while this light lasts, dear, dear Mortara, how I do long, long to see you! See you? Oh! that is too much to hope for and too much to pray for. Indeed, the haunting convictions, shaped out of that long ago *vision*, make me almost know that it may not, cannot be. Alas! no, Fortune seldom gives so largely but to take again, and like the rainbow upon the watery clouds I fear her smile on me brightens but to fade away; and I must learn to look for the joy of seeing you, or anything beyond this little sunny opening in the wilderness, as I have learned to look for all the

joys hope once painted so brightly along my life's horizon.

Opposite points, though, long pursued, must finally meet; so some day our paths, like broken circles, may join again. And till then, dearest Mortara, fare thee well, while with all the renewed promises of thy last dear letter wrapped warm in my heart, blessings be on thee like the rains, love like the dews, and prayers for thee all heavenward like the breath and the odor of the flowers! HELEN.

New Orleans, *January* 17, 1853.

Mortara, — Only from the far away land of the blest could one receive tidings more sweet and more beautiful than this, thy letter, brings. Oh! joy beyond words. You coming? Mortara coming? The thought suffocates; my breath stops; I think where to hide me. "I would not see you for the world, and yet for the world I would not miss seeing you!"

My thoughts swell, my heart beats, fancy flies, and I tremble as if the grave yawned, when I should be calm in the fullness of joy.

Three years, so long and weary, seem now but a bridge, a golden span, linking the sunny past to the hoping, fearing present; but a "Bridge of *Sighs*" mayhap, for oh! what lies beyond? Love cometh only from above, and alas! I have no Franklin power by which to steal it down upon you, Mortara, as now I would fain woo a smile from those black eyes of thine. Ah! no, for although lacking little of their lost lustre, these eyes of mine are still hardly the eyes, I ween, for looking love to eyes again. Once more bathed in the enkindling flashes of yours, though, they will be at least clairvoyant enough to miss the palest ray that has ever beamed in a smile of thine. I shall know, too, if so much as

one thought in all your heart be faced backward, or if one word of your love be found to weigh in its weighing even the weight of a shadow less.

Richer and prouder and haughtier than before! Pulseless hands will greet you, false lips salute you, and falser hearts seek you. But oh! would, dearest, I had some Jupiter chariot and horses with hoofs of fire to speed thy coming; stars to guide thee, and legions to bring thee! O Morning, open wide thy portals! Let the world be bright and new! Mortara comes, Mortara comes! All life is in that word, all hope is in it and all fear. My Judea regained, my Israel returning? Those arms still my "belts of gold," and thy heart still a refuge from the world? Thy love a light over its wastes, and, more than all, thy noble self forever near? Oh! for a thousand hearts to rejoice, and ten thousand lips to speak while mine eyes weep tears that drown words.

But, dear, noble Mortara, call not all the happiness your great heart plans for me a return for the one poor little service once in my power to render you. No, no, say not so! A grain of sand weighed from your love were more to my heart than the world from your obligation. Love is blessed only with love; and gifts, fortune, benefits, all were nothing save thine own ever-abiding love were with it. While every word of your precious letter is heavy with promise, this one line at its close makes the gold and the purple of it all: —

"Dearest Helen, all that I ever was to you I am, and all that I am, with God's help, I ever shall be." Yesterday I was poor in spirit, poor in heart, poor in all things; but to-day this one line makes my heart evermore,

> "A palace rich and purple chambered,
> And *the lord himself at home.*"

Ah! yes, dearest, dearest Mortara, I know now that thou art too great and too noble ever, ever to change; and ere long, if not in this world, far, far up in the flowery fields of God's love, radiant in the light of heaven, I shall walk linked hands with thee, and love thee forever, forever!

O star of my soul, light of my thoughts, all the angels attend thee; and our Heavenly Father grant that the slow turning moons, yet to come and wane, be crowded only with all holy thanks, and end only in love's sweet rejoicings,

HELEN.

PART VI.

Louisville, Kentucky, *June* 1, 1853.

Mortara, — I received your dear sad letter in the far South, and all the way up the river I have worn it on my heart, now weeping and now rejoicing over its contents: weeping that like the Roman in his prophecy you are sitting alone in that far-off land amidst the smouldering ruins of your fortunes, your hopes, and your toils; but rejoicing that like the prophet among the desolations of Jerusalem, you have the heart to feel that the hand of your God is good upon you, and the courage still "to rise up and build." O dearest, dearest, noblest Mortara, pray do so, and never, never despair! The good angels will be thy watch day and night, while my heart will be making prayers unto our God for thee, even from the rising of the morning till the stars appear.

Oh, no, no! be not disheartened, but go strengthen thyself and encamp again over against the world like Israel's two little flocks of kids, trusting in the Lord who is both God of the hills and of the valleys; and ere many years are past, believe me, you will be saying, like brave Themistocles in his exile: "I had been undone but for my undoing."

The bitter sweet is after all life's richest sweet,

only so we had the taste or the wisdom to relish it, and toiling in a good cause a thousand, thousand times better for the soul than sipping from that vapid cup the world calls happiness.

Men name endurance the mightiest of the virtues, but it is far more apportioned to woman's lot than to man's. The glory of action is his; and, Mortara, even now despite my tears for your losses, I almost envy you the exciting strifes of rebuilding your broken fortunes. Oh! only to-day do I see how courageous and noble and true you are. As the frosts upon the forest leaves bring out their splendors, so adversities do but reveal your greatness and your goodness. And O Mortara, Heaven knows too that you were never, never before half so precious and half so beloved. With your immense wealth and your thousand other nameless advantages, you seemed to me almost some far-off blessed Abraham, with an impassable gulf between; but to-day, with the ashes of your proud hopes upon your head and your heart bowed with disappointment, my spirit would fain cross the deserts of the universe to rest one hour in the bosom of your sympathies and your love.

Calling you mine, though, seems always like claiming something possibly in the gift of God and possibly not; and as a proof of your unabated love, how I bless you for the risk that snatched from the flames my picture and my letters! How I bless you too, brave, noble Mor-

tara, that even amid the gloom and the untold ruin around you, you can still forget all to pity my disappointment, and rejoice at the new light in these poor, poor eyes of mine. But, dearest, I know now that it may not, cannot last. Alas! no; the closing scene of the *vision* with the light and the day is not yet. Five more scenes of the long, lonely way still wait to be wandered through, and I find it hard indeed to be consoled for the disappointment of these words: "God only knows now when I may return."

Oh! how like an eternity the long night of your absence breaks upon my heart, as if all time were too short for its setting sun to rise again. Alas! but for this promise the dove of hope had taken wing from my soul to return no more, nevermore:

"Memory of you and the past can only cease with death." Thus all that Heaven sends, departing bequeaths its comforter; and O dearest, ever dearest Mortara, repeat these words often, often! Let them be green leaves, assuring me again and again that the heart whence they came is forever fresh and sunny and beautiful, as erst it was.

So, commending you, dearest, to the love of God and the tender mercies of the blessed Messiah, in all love and all tears, as ever and forever I wait for thee and watch for thee and pray for thee.

HELEN.

PART VII.

Canaseraga Valley, *August* 15, 1854.

Mortara, — O thou on whom my soul smiles, and around whom love ever lingers! Thou embalmed, preserved, endeared; thou all beloved! Thou star remote, yet never gone; thou always near, yet ever distant, would thou wert with me, would thou wert with me! Thy coming were as I oft have met thee in the paradise of dreams; thy embrace the reception of the angels, and thy whispers and thy kisses the joys that my heart knew in the days that are gone, in the days that are gone!

By its long waiting my spirit has grown meek and forbearing; but sometimes this heart of mine rebels, and every voice of my soul cries: I must hear from Mortara or die. But death comes not, and days — long, weary days — cluster in my memory like night-blossoms bedewed with darkness.

I am writing you with your portrait smiling down upon me here, and ever and anon I fancy your bright eyes flashing a look over my page, and your eloquent lips moving to words just ever so little too low for the rapture of mine ear. Ah! I would fain ask of thy shadow even: When will ambition be gratified, those high

hopes once more builded up, and all that weighs down thy great heart swept away?

Oh, could I melt down the pleasures of a lifetime into one draught, I would give it for the intoxicating joy of once beholding those black eyes of thine, radiant with the fullness of all their brilliant desires.

What! did I then sigh to see thee a Solomon with his shining Ophirs to draw from, or a Crœsus with his glittering vaults uncounted? Ah! as well give thee wings to touch the stars, and then go sighing evermore for the world's lost Alkahest, wherewith to melt and mould thy heart anew, summon thy thoughts, and evoke thy presence, all radiant and beautiful as thou art. No, no! Even the dream of thy coming is a thing to break joy upon, and a thousand, thousand times better than mourning thy loss amid the tombs of thy promises gone to decay. Would, though, such were the pity in heaven for beings out of it that, though destined nevermore to set my heart around with thy smile, I might at least die for thee; and, dying, seize the voices of the winds evermore to hymn thy name with the swelling harmonies of the skies, teach it to the breezes o'er the main, and whisper it with the low breathing of the flowers!

Mortara, every moon, as I promised, I write you; but alas! no moon, however bright, brings me any more aught in return. Either some untoward fate deprives me of your letters, or in

your renewed strifes for fortune you make yourself forget one who, wearing thy name forever on her lips, wears the years away wreathing it o'er and o'er with prayers for thee, all luminous with love and dewy with tears.

Oh! the assembled universe in the love I bear it could not balance one throb my heart feels for thee; and had I but one new whisper from thy love, Mortara, the radiant night-heaven with all its skies and stars could not buy it. Ah! no; *dark* and lonely as the world is, even to know that you live with so much as a prayer for me shut up in your thoughts were a thousand, thousand times more to my joy than a crown set with stars plucked from the belts of Orion, while one other fond word of thine were forevermore the sweet *Selah* to my heart's last dream of love.

Alas! language is too poor. It doth but symbol the heart's deep yearnings, and words are weights to my love's white-winged thoughts of thee.

But, Mortara, fare thee well! Ere long thou wilt come again, and I shall scream as though existence were spent in that one breath, and my heart will sink with the weight of its very joy.

HELEN.

CANASERAGA VALLEY, *Sepiember* 17, 1854.

MORTARA, — This is one of those quandary days when one hardly knows what to do with one's self. Indeed, all nature seems in a quandary. Glad summer has left us, and this is the coming in of autumn. The sky looks wondering whether to wear her white, her blue, or her smoky veil. The leaves on the trees seem in doubt whether to turn red or yellow or stay green, and the birds appear to be postponing from day to day some long half-desired and half-dreaded journey. Just so my heart coaxes me: Do not go to-day, to-morrow; but oh! to-morrow I must go.

The fires that kindle my thoughts and the tides that flow in my veins all fountain here; but had this valley home no other endearment, so long as thy shadow hangs upon its walls it is a Mecca temple, where to journey to and pray and weep.

Your letter, care of Benoni, was lost; and, believe me, had I barks on all the seas and they were wrecked, I had regretted them less than that dear letter of thine, with all its precious freightage gone down forever. Love magnifieth all things, but mostly that which it hath lost. Thy letter here, it were perchance cold

and accusing, but lost 't is a chart of thy love's promised Eden, with thy tears like dews on all the flowers, and thy sighs like lonely winds, moaning ever, ever. Ah! fancy, thou genii to love, how much I owe thee!

Pray, Mortara, how much gold must you have to cancel those "debts of honor," as you call them? How high must the pile be, and at what rate does it grow? Oh! tell me for an estimate whereon to build hope, the while I go on wandering, wandering, toiling as ever with thy name last on my lips, thine image latest in my thoughts, and fond memories of thee forever circling around my heart.

Oh! this world is such a chaos of contradictions. We do not reach blessings, but forever pendulum betwixt them, always going to possess, but never possessing. I left thee for the world, but leaving thee I left the world, — left thee alas! at the fated call of the *vision;* hence forever wandering, wandering, just as now I press hands and part with all who bless and smile on me here, thus garlanding the tomb thine absence forever makes in my soul.

So, waiting the dawn of the morrow, I send thee once again all holy greeting, with a never failing *hin* of love and a golden *ephah* of blessing.

HELEN.

PART VIII.

MONTREAL, C. E., *December* 1, 1854.

MORTARA, — My spirit has gone back into itself, and my heart has barred its every portal. My lips are sealed. I have no words, and mine eyes swim in unshed tears. Oh! this is the excess of joy, the grief of pleasure, the muteness of inexpressible delight. Pray, Mortara, is it a dream? Let me creep to your feet, let me touch your hands, and oh! tell me if this side of heaven I do indeed greet you again with praise and love even on your lips!

You say: "When your angels bring me back." Ah! me, I would stay from heaven many long weary years, for the light and gladness and joy and honor of that one *Purim* day. But alas! *my angels* are not the mighty but the gentle ones, and you, dearest, are slow to be coaxed.

"Sorrow is knowledge," and wisdom as surely blanches the locks as death pales the cheek. What wonder, then, thou dear sage, that thine should be frosting gray even so early? You always seemed to me a sort of Mejnour, and now with those black curls so silvered o'er you must be looking an *ancient* indeed! But oh! love is immortal; love is always young. It is

the soul's one wilderness garment that waxeth not old.

Alas! what enemy have I among the angels or in the world, that so many of thy dear letters have been lost, when their contents had been such precious crumbs to this Lazarus heart of mine? But though lost, I bless you for them all, as I rejoice to know that those little pilgrimages are still kept up in honor of the arrival of mine, and offerings for them doubled too when written with my own hand.

The old alchemist, whose mystic vapors wrought such magic upon my eyes, has gone again to his own land, leaving the day little or no brighter to me than when he came; and henceon I do but wait the return of my pale Polar star, whose sweet light faded from my sky so long, long ago, oh! so long, long ago.

Mortara, I did indeed turn back when the fates began to frown upon your way. My heart, though, was never wronged more than by these words at the close of your letter: "If you loved me as you loved another" —

Madame De Staël said truly: "Happy are they who meet in early life the one they should love always." She might have added, though:

But oftener, far oftener, the history of woman's heart is the history of the vine, which first reaches out its tendrils perchance to the stalk; that outgrown, it descends to the ground and creeps timidly to the pole or the blossoming

cherry; thence to the fence and thence to the elm or the oak, around which it climbs and clings every day closer and closer, until all its strength lies in that one grasp. Perhaps it questions and wonders while it climbs and clings: "Is this eternal?" and then there comes out, from the deep heart of the oak, a voice: —

"Forever, forever!" Years roll on. The oak is gray and old, but the vine with fresh life covers it over, while with unseen and ever multiplying ties it clings closer and closer. The tree dies, the winds fell it to the ground; and where now the vine? Its life was in that one tree, and though bruised and broken it still twines and clings, nor once unclasps its circling arms.

Oh! so, dearest, ever dearest Mortara, through all time my soul must cling to you. I would unwind the cords that bind me, but alas! I cannot. Like the stars in their blue homes my spirit will be watching you, while in the dust of its decayed hopes my heart will be ever writing thy name anew. Oh! pity me then, dearest, noblest Mortara, while now I look on the dear hand once more so generously held out to me and weep alas! that it may not, cannot guide me back to thee again. At sight of the words: "I will cross the waves of one ocean and await you at A ——," sweet Minnie stopped reading, and more gasped than exclaimed: —

"Now, now!" — while my heart has scarcely had a beat in it since. She has little to bind

her here, and would gladly go out with me to stand bridesmaid and meet you with "the parson and his scroll," as you say. But oh! I am thinking of the two dear heads, now gray and fast growing old, and remember that of the drafts that were to pay for the mill, yet more are to be sent; while the house, so light and warm and full of cheer, has still always a day of due for the rent. For the *eight*, too, whose rosy faces you saw clustered in M ——, as yet only three weddings have had to be made; three are still to leave school, and until the last has turned to another for trust and for guidance, your example of devotion to your own should be rebuke enough to stay me from leaving them. Beside, Mortara, you do not need me. I could do nothing for you but love you, and tell you so the day through. And is it not better, then, that I stay to pluck thorns from their paths rather than go for you to scatter flowers in mine?

God's ways are not as ours, and I was fleeing from His way when I followed *one* down to the grave; and now the retracing footsteps are indeed slow and weary, the stars even refusing their light thereon, as the sun deigns but a glimmer of his, while sweet Justice seems to find pleasure lengthening out her once slighted work over the weary years like a fated web that the angels come to unravel by night.

Alas! that the little of heaven in us should be so divided against itself that we know not

what to do. Duty points pleadingly one way, while love is weeping great tears to go the other, and both are love and both are duty. To stay, though, seems more the way of the *vision*, and hence more the way the angels are likely to smile on.

But O Mortara, you will accomplish what you went away for, and come again sometime, will you not? You must, you must! And will I forget you? Will I know thy voice again? Were my heart the lost Pleiade, thy lips, thy tread even would call it back. You taught me to love, and the hills will sooner gather back their rivers from the seas than one love-tide from my soul ever cease to flow, or one thought of mine ever lose its memory of thee. HELEN.

PART IX.

St. Louis, Mo., *April* 4, 1855.

Mortara, — Many moons have shimmered their cold light upon the world since the date of thy last; but now, while all things warm with life, may not thy heart also break the frosty fetters that have so long bound and locked it away?

The soul has its springtime, its summer, and its winter; but oh! the winter of thy freezing silence has lasted too long. Speak but one word, and every thought will put on freshness, every feeling bud and blossom. Smile, and mine eyes were fountains of tears, sparkling in the light of happy memories. Say thou wilt ever come again, and the world were blissful Eden full of singing birds, with skies raining dews of gladness odorous with love. Ah! count the years, count the days, count the minutes, and call them each a century, and thou wilt have but a poor estimate of what my heart calls the eternity of your absence, and the banishment of this long silence.

Mortara, just the hours of this one gloomy evening, enlivened by your words and illumined by your presence, were more to me than an age of millenniums without you. But alas! things too bright consume themselves, and such was

our last evening together, when, like the stars looking into heaven and smiling back upon the world, your fond eyes were smiling on me.

Now imagination like a pitiless genii is having it all her own way, smiting my heart with useless wails of the-might-have-been. Oh, the-might-have-been! What human soul has not sung that dirge? Verily, the winds come howling it by like an invisible band of mourners from the grave of all things. Alas! is anything in this life real, or are we indeed shadows, and this world altogether a shadowy land, while the blackened skies above give us only glimpses of a far-off better home, better friends, and better love?

Oh! I am so weary to-night, oh! so weary. Far back, ever so far back, I crossed the path of one whose first word melted over my soul like a touch of fate. We were opposite bound, — his way was not my way. We parted, but like a beautiful avenger he bore away with him my soul, and hence, on, on, forever and forever on, I wander, wander, seeking, hoping, praying, but never, never finding.

O Thou who art set in the throne, that judgest right, be they not chid in heaven who do us such wrong; who pluck out our hearts, leaving us just so much of life as serves our feet and hands to move, while all else is forever away, away, away? Or, to Thine all-seeing eye, do they indeed most bless who smite us thus, by

rendering us henceon insensible to all lighter blows? O thou sweetest bitter, thou dearest wretchedness of heart that we name love, without thee what calm, what blessedness!

Alas! Mortara, brighter charms than the diamonds in the sands may come to bind thee to those balmy skies. Oh, would I were there with the pearls of the sea to win me back my "belts of gold," and that heart of thine, which our Heavenly Father grant heave never with pain and throb never with but holy desire; all heavenly feelings inhabit there, and white-winged thoughts hie thence to noble purposes!

The soul knoweth nothing so freezing as a frosty look from eyes once dewy with the tears of love; and better, Mortara, I shut mine eyes and die than that thou shouldst return to look coldly on me. But with these words for memory and hope to break smiles upon, it is folly to chide and weakness to doubt: —

"Know always that I love you, and believe always that I write you."

Ah! yes, I must believe, I will believe; and what though the days be long — blessings, slow coming, purple by the way, and they are richest in the end who longest wait. Love, too, oft blesses most when most withholding; and so, dearest Mortara, once more bowing and kissing the hand that denies, true like those who watch in heaven, I wait for thee and pray for thee.

HELEN.

FRANKFORT, KY., *May* 16, 1855.

MORTARA, — Oh, for new thoughts to write thee, — thoughts that fly and words that burn! All things are stale. The world seems old and weary. The skies wear a dismal gray, and the rains fall heavily. The Mayflowers droop their heads, and my thoughts are heavy with the dews of sorrow.

You come no more to sit beside me, Mortara, as in the long ago, when hours went gliding by, and we believing but moments had flown; when, drawing sweet converse from our own hearts, you pictured oft as in the mirror of your love the mansion fair wherein our twainèd shadows were to fall. One, I mind me, was in the land of palms. It had belonged to the Mortaras of old, and gold now would restore it to the far descendant of their house; a palace, the softened light in whose windows was to offend never these veilèd eyes of mine, and whose Oriental hangings should make only downy collisions with my "snowy brow" moving softly their splendors among; a palace of sunshine amid shades and perfumes, with its gates standing always ajar waiting, waiting that one halcyon day when wedded we two would be, — wedded, Mortara and me! The angels had us by the hand, though, and now alas! for all save the dreams of bliss

that we conjured then from a Canaan that only our own love-lighted eyes were ever to see — a Canaan whose river between but widens and deepens; whose trumpet priests make no blast, and whose Joshua to go over and possess it cries never but to halt, and whose pillar of cloud alas! beckons never but to stay, stay, stay!

So, the summer of life wanes, the autumn draws on apace, and then the winter and then the grave. But oh! beyond is that beautiful springtime where all are young again, where the warm tides of life never fail, and its fresh hues never fade. But, Mortara, even there, methinks, I were lonely without thee, and far down by those Orient gates I were waiting and thinking about thee.

A little time ago, I wished thee unhappy like myself; but no, no! I have called the reporting angel back, and bade him say in heaven that far, far sooner sorrow come to me than the shadow of ill to thee. I have prayed for thee, too, all prosperity and all joy and peace in love's sweet forgiveness, craving for myself, alas! naught save thy heart, that were to me ever a Demidoff palace lighted with mine own undying love for thee; and once more mine, I were rich enough to give queens charity.

Now the world is still, and Silence, through her weird telephone of the night, is whispering to me; — whispering from far over the land and the sea chidings, Mortara, that stir all my soul's

impassioned longings to rise up and face my steps toward the sunset and thee. But alas! not till the vows on my lips to the dead are forgotten in heaven, and time has unrolled the last scene foreshadowed in the *vision*, can I ever, ever, ever be free. Had the light remained in my eyes, though, I might have compromised with the angels for the rest, and gone out "to meet you half way;" but wrapped in these clouds I am their slave again, fast chained to the mysterious old pillar of the *vision*, which even you should be diviner enough by this time to see was but a forecast of what the great, thousand-eyed world would be to me in the darkness. You should see, also, that to the rounded bits of gold it contains myself is but the "Open Sesame," and the little books I carry the magic wand by which they are transferred, not to my keeping, but to my hand, the while the same ever-waiting demand spirits them away. So I wander, wander, literally picking the shining little circlets from the gloomy old presence that everywhere overshadows me with dread, — precisely as it was in the *vision*. Some day, though, in a way and by means now impossible to foresee, the gold will all suddenly disappear, and quantities of a dark green material come in its stead. Of that too, despite the rougher ways it will bring, I am fated to wander and gather the same as of the gold, — wander, toil, and gather, answering ever to the same unsatisfied call, and with the same

indifference to possession. But then, just as suddenly and in a way just as unlooked for, the dark green material will also disappear, followed ere long by the shining out of the gold again in something like tablets or squares; and then the end, with its purple dawn from afar.

But oh! from the Mount Nebo of this lonely hour how hopeless and endless it all seems, while far back over the past I see only the *Galeed* that my heart set up where, ages ago, I pressed hands and parted with thee. Have mercy, then, Mortara! Be thy noble self again, and let this freezing silence chide me no longer. Oh! one word of hope and the slow turning hours were but new dials to wait and watch for thee in, with every thought bearing torches of welcome and tiptoe with expectant delight. . . .

But as Adam and Eve brought Paradise into the world, so my heart forever carries love and thee in its memory, as my thoughts will be bearing thy name for a light o'er the way when the night-stars of all time have set. HELEN.

PART X.

New York, *January* 1, 1856.

Mortara, — Far away in that western Orient, where soft skies rain dews upon the golden sands and drink back odors from the flowers, your heart has become like "the charmed sea," lulling even the winds to sleep upon its bosom; and what a sin to roil its sunny bays with rivulets from my gloomy feelings! But another year has counted out its moons and seasons to the world, and marked its gloomy centuries of waiting upon this heart of mine.

The bells are ringing. The city seems one great organ throbbing with harmonies, and all are merry, merry; while Time with withered hand writes himself older, or perchance, in the eternal circle of things, younger.

Oh! would there were a New Year to life, a new birth to love, a fresh waking to the heart, a regeneration to body and soul without the pain and the fear of dying. Would that we children of Eve, by some second eating, might win back that primal youth beneath palms and amaranths, surpassing even Milton's picturing! Or would there were at least some backward way to the end of time, that I might be, as my heart is now, ever journeying adown the sunny slopes

of memory, meeting with thee, parting with thee, praying for thee, and loving thee ever, ever, ever! Ah! yes, wandering, how sweet it were to find thee thus again, as long, long ago, and be called thine, be called dear; when, turning whichever way I would, myself seemed winding praises from thy lips that an angel might covet to hear.

But O ill-starred past! Like the golden beams braiding along thy horizon, thy promises and thy glories have faded away; and on this glad day, while heaven is prodigal with gifts and the world jubilant with mirth, I am alone, alone, *alone!*

Mortara, it is weakness to love thee so; but the angels do pity while I myself do chide myself and blush for the heart that I cannot change. Oh, send me but one word, and with my grateful tears I will dissolve that one word and drink it, as did Egypt's queen the pearl worth a kingdom; and it shall be to my heart a life elixir, a balm for all ills save the pain and the bliss of loving thee.

Where God wills that we tread His angels are swift to beckon the way, and following, I go wandering, wandering, a stranger and lonely and weary everywhere, with only light enough shut up in my heart to miss thee by.

But, lacking all things, love hath yet itself wherewith to bless; and I pray for thee, Mortara, Happy New Years, golden sheaves of them, banded with silver and knotted with good deeds!

HELEN.

MONTGOMERY, ALA., *April* 25, 1856.

MORTARA, — This is your Sabbath, but I feel it no sin to give its sacred hours to love and thee; for like David my starving soul would fain seize the purple clusters from off the love-altar at which it comes to worship.

Alas! my heart, like a neglected watch, has run down, and stands forever pointing backward to that fated hour since when you have come no more. Long years roll on, and the seasons change as before. The moon comes over the hills and wanes and comes again. Stars rise and set. Old friends and new ones come and pass away. These hands press other hands, and these lips whisper greeting and adieu while my poor heart's beatings are hushed and I am joyful no more. But one in heaven hath pity for me, albeit less beloved, and to-day like a green leaf from the sunny past a long-lamented letter of thine comes smiling back to me. In it you sent me the engagement ring, and drew such pictures of happiness that one would think your hand had builded temples for Happiness herself to dwell in. Oh! this precious, precious letter! It was thy first will and testament of love; and while I wind anew its sacred lines around my heart, and link again its burning words to my

thoughts, the love-angel whispers me: 'T is thy last, last!

But, Mortara, this is no chimera that we are living, no dream. We bear in our hands threads of fate, by which our souls are as surely bound as the twin stars that walk the skies, wearing each the other's smiles and swelling each the other's harmonies. The earth may send up clouds to hide her from the moon, but she cannot stay from the moon her attraction. No more, through all time and all distance, can you stay my spirit from drawing after you; and as from half a world away our paths have crossed and re-crossed, so ere long, if not in this world, in the far-off better land of better love we shall surely meet again. There I shall league with the angels to lend me all charms, and robe me in all the graces. Goodness shall be my girdle, gemmed with shining deeds; Love, my crown, set with smiles all for thee; Forgiveness, my sceptre, pearly with tears; and my kingdom, thy heart, while thou payest me back love an hundred-fold. O happy queen, happy conqueror!

But alas! while fancy, silvery-winged, can thus outstrip distance, defy time, and make herself regal with the impossible, the heart is all human; and to-day, though indeed up among the angels where they give harps of gold, mine would make little music save it should strike some chord like unto my soul's memory of thee.

But I wrong thee, Mortara, — thou dost not,

canst not, forget. Thou art too noble and too true; and whatever be the cause of this silence, oft, oft when the world is still and the stars grow pale with watching, the love-angel comes to flit thy thoughts with her white wings until thou dost at least dream of me. Oh, then pray speak; oh, speak to me once more, Mortara — this silence is death! My heart is breaking, my soul will leave me! Have mercy, have mercy, and write me but one word! No, no, I should hate that one word, and burn it with my very hate save it were that you love me and that you never forget!

HELEN.

CHARLESTON, S. C., *April* 1, 1857.

MORTARA, — This is a dreamy day, and far over land and sea my thoughts are flying languidly to thee. Like unmated birds they carry memories of nests robbed and gone. Like eagles, agèd and bald, they poise on their wings over places hallowed and old.

Would I had some new phrase for love, some new figure for hope, and new words for despair! Oh! this is no dream, no fiction, but earnest, earnest reality: my heart is forever with you, and you are forever gone, gone. How lonely and weary, then, is life, how tasteless all its joys, and how vacant every scene. But wherefore blame thee? Never, never! Rather watch on and wait till loneliness and waiting wrap my heart in the gloomy mould of centuries. My spirit faints and my heart is weary; I bow my head and weep, and despise the weakness that I cannot help — despise myself, alas! — but oh! as well teach the forest birds new songs, give the winds new strains, and the waves yonder new shapes, as woo one thought of mine from its memory of thee. I love thee, Mortara, as the Polar star loves the world its pale eye forever watches; and sooner the skies fall than I forget thee, all-forgetful as thou art.

Ah! whence these weird forebodings to-day, and why this heavy calm upon the world? No whisper on the breeze nor the rustling of a wing, as though all the spirits of earth and air stood still with some great pity. Tell me, Mortara, claimeth another thine arm while I would fain wrap myself in it and die? Oh! that were wretchedness to all, and woe indeed to one.

I made thee free, and my heart was buried — buried alive, albeit — when the voice of thy letters from afar rekindled the fires upon its desolate hearth and re-illumined the lights adown the halls of memory by whose flickering rays I have been so long watching and waiting for thee. And wouldst thou now teach a brighter smile to fetter thy lips and turn thy thoughts away? Hark! Mortara, thy destiny is the counterpart of mine, and thy heart, thy soul, will turn again albe another pale and droop at thy side.

When by the arts of that old alchemist the light shone on my steps again, I flew to the valley that holds thy shadow, and, pressing it close, traced as I had believed in each noble lineament the well-remembered face of him who stood apart from me with downcast eyes in the closing scene of the *vision.*

Ah! that *vision,* so fleeting and yet so eternal! I was a school-girl then, with the world so bright around me that only heaven itself could have made it brighter. But alas! the *to be*

hews its own way, and ere twice twelve moons had come and waned I awoke from a troubled sleep but to find the clouds of a relentless fate fallen cold and thick around me. The *vision* had lived in my thoughts, and I was not long discovering that my lot and its gloomy scenes were henceforth to be one. I bowed my head, making no murmur; and so on, on I have wandered, reeling off the years so lonely, so weary, and so dark that only God hath light to count them by.

But then the end and that purple dawn from afar, breaking its rainbow waves at our feet — for thou wast indeed there, Mortara, thy noble self, calm and sad, like one who had suffered much and waited long, as thou wilt be again.

But for that conviction, so long since verified to a certainty, I might as well be a child, and cry for the stars in the running brooks, or sigh for the ribbons of the rainbow, as longer look for response to word or entreaty of mine. Ah! no, had I sceptres, many as the rounds in Jacob's ladder, and kingdoms, broad as the worlds it climbed, I could now never hope to win thee back with thy heart and thy love.

But while we rule ourselves we are overruled; and as the Sun casts not his shadows always the same way, so the shades that have clouded my morning the evening will turn across thy heart, and ere long thy spirit will come again to seek sympathy from mine, even as now my

thoughts are forever turning for light and for love to thee.

Thus love maketh the light to our dreams, and planteth hope in the midst of our sorrow. In darkness and in danger, too, love cometh to us ever, ever, now warning, now chiding, now blessing, and always safely guarding. Love lightens labor, shortens distance, and quickens time. Love teaches to forgive, helps to forget, and whitens the memory of all things. Love paints every hope, brightens every scene, and maketh beautiful whatsoe'er it shines on. Love is wisdom, love is high, love is holy. Love is God. Love gloweth in the hearts of the angels, wreathes the smiles on their brows, and melts the kisses on their lips. Love is the light of the beautiful beyond, and to meet thee there, Mortara, is more than hope. I shall know thee by the charm of thy spirit, by the name on my lips, by the smile on my heart, and by thy voice, though blent with the harp-notes on the airs of heaven.

HELEN.

PART XI.

St. Paul, Minn., *July* 6, 1858.

Mortara, — While these burning words from your pen to-day are but so many golden links in the chain that must forever bind our souls, I can only hold them from me, and bow my head and weep, so relentless seems the hand that after so many years lifts the veil but to reveal the impassable gulf between.

I never doubted your honor, Mortara, nor feared to trust either you or your love. But honor is not your religion, and you could no more have stricken the law of your people and the dying charge of your noble father from the deep written page of your being than my heart banish from its memory a life-long vow and the command: "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform." No, and when I discovered your unrest, and saw how plainly the finger of Providence was pointing our paths asunder, I hastened to make you free, free. Sweet Almah said you sat long hours gazing into my letter, as if it had been a leaf from the book of fate; and then you arose, bade all a long adieu, and went on board the ship.

Two years dragged themselves slowly by, and then from half a world away came your letter,

telling me over and over of your unabated love, and claiming still the guardianship of my heart if not of myself, while with promises of return the tomb of your absence was garlanded anew; birds of hope sang above it, and though so far away, even to know that you lived lent a charm to life which now, alas! is gone, gone, forever and forever gone. Ah! yes, my life's last trust is broken, and all save its one sweet star of faith in the beautiful beyond gone down forever. The past gleams over the ruin but to reveal its desolation and its woe, and cherished memories come back but to smile and turn to scorn.

Oh! how live with the cold corse of thy love thus forever shut up in my soul? How bear it on, far over the waste of years, sad and alone, — a hopeless, nameless sorrow for which the world has no solace and no tears? But the blessing of love is loving, and a thousand, thousand times better thus to lose thee than never to have known thee and never to have loved thee; and far, far better, too, never to meet thee again than never to have parted.

To-day, like faded hopes and withered leaves, my returned letters are falling around me, revealing alas! but too sadly the autumn and the searing frosts whence they came. Upon the margins of many of them, though, are dear, hallowed words, which, like spirit-rods, move upon the past, bringing back even thyself, Mortara, as long ago, holding out the jeweled mantle of

thy love to shield me from the world, the cloud, and the storm.

Alas! be these letters of ten years the Galeed and Mizpah between us; and would we stood now like Jacob and Laban beneath those solemn woods that, parting as we are, — to meet upon the same plane of life never, never, nevermore, — I might tell you with my own lips that as I still hope to meet you in heaven I would not dry one tear, turn one shadow, nor lift one footprint from all the lonely, toiling past. No, no! We might have joined our hands, but our duties and the high interests of our souls, never! And though this final breaking of the ties and the pledges that bound us robbed my life tenfold more desolate, I should still, Mortara, more than forgive you, while Heaven sees in my heart something akin to pity for her whom the angels have sent to lead you farther and farther from me, that henceforth I may know only duty, and watch only for the white hands that beckon its lonely way.

With fortunes almost greater than fell to the Prince of Uz in his brightest days, and more than all, with one waiting to be your bride who doubtless loves you for yourself alone, and whose smiles make the promised rose leaves to your brimming cup — ah! yes, Mortara, with so much to be glad for it were worse than selfish not to offer you most heartfelt congratulations; and now, from a heart baptized with many tears, I

pray for you love to light all the shades of life, the honors of this world, and peace with the next to crown its goal.

But oh! as God is love, "love wills to be loved;" and when even now, upon the eve of your great happiness, you still whisper back to me of sorrow and regret linked with the burning words, "forever, forever," whether these words mock or bless I bless you for them; and while I wander on, filling up my allotted part of our destiny, they will be sweet vestal-lights far o'er the weary way, inviting prayers for you still; and though we meet no more till in the closing scene of the *vision* or till the records in heaven have grown pale with years, fond memories of you will be still circling around my heart, and thy name still dear on my lips.

Thus, Mortara, bidding you farewell, I dig and bury my heart again, leaving only the heaven-lighted star of faith in the beautiful beyond smiling above its lonely tomb; while to me the past, the future, and life all is but a sea of tears, whose dark shores lie strewn with the wreck of hopes.

HELEN.

PART XII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE AUTHOR'S JOURNAL.

New York, *May* 17, 1870. — Twenty years have worn their furrows on my brow, and lengthened their shadows o'er my heart. Twenty long weary years, alas! have clustered their lonely days in my memory until I had said: Love in me is dead, and learned to smile back upon the weakness of the past with almost pity. But now, when seven scenes of the *vision* have been unfolded, and all their heavy portent rounded upon the years of my life; when all that has made the burden of their wanderings light and the import of them beautiful is so nearly accomplished; when the blessed twain whom Heaven robbed poor, the better to enrich them with love, are worshipping again beneath vine and fig-tree of their own; when all their nestlings save one have taken wing to build nests and rear nestlings of their own; when so little of all that was foreshadowed remains to be waited for and watched for, I come here, and lo! from half a world away, Mortara's bark lies moored again by this hallowed shore. Indeed, here, — even here, where we parted so long, long ago, — amid a bustling crowd of all nations and tongues, angel-

led, we sat down so near to each other that our hands might have touched.

Ah! yes, we have met again, met again! He has been here and sat in this room while we talked our souls regal in the light of the beautiful bygone, — talked as though we ourselves had indeed crossed paths in some sphere remote, save that, in all, our thoughts were still luminous with sweet remembrance. Talked, talked; and then at last rising to depart, how dear and beautiful it was of him to clasp my two hands warm in his once more as of old, not to steal kisses from my pouting, complaining lips again, but to tell me in words that might melt from the lips of one angel to another how precious and how sacred I am to him and have ever been; how he has cherished me in his heart of hearts as something not altogether of this world, and shall go down to the grave even with my name on his lips.

O faith, thou mightiest gift of God; thou white-winged trust in Him who doeth all things well; thou one light over His darkest providences, lingering to cheer when all else has passed away, thy whisper upon the dull ear of the night: He will come again, he will come again, I heard in the breezes, and my heart shaped it out of the hoarse voices of the winds! I heard it in the echoes of the past. I heard it everywhere, and believed and watched and waited. And now, like a resurrection from de-

spair, his voice rings again through all the silent chambers of my soul.

Oh, this one long *Purim* day, whose dawn brought so much to be grateful for, and whose evening leaves nothing to regret! Once I would fain have stopped time and basked forever in the rich effulgence of its beams, braided rainbow hopes from them, and fringed every cloud with their light. But alas! what are toils for, sorrows for, and tears for, if not to temper our feelings and fold down the wings to our fancies, unchain our hearts from the world, and put us linked hands with the angels who seem sometimes to forsake their sweet guidance, and rush us forward across Rubicons to destinies themselves even would fain hide from; just as, through the long weary years, they have been leading me through phase after phase of that dark foreshadowed way whose darker reality turned the morning of my life into a night of years and changed the world to a thing of gloom that everywhere has overawed me with fear, — that fated *vision* alas! now so nearly ended, but whose closing scene perchance lapsed itself to within the boundary of the unseen, and the day is no more to dawn for me here!

Have mercy then, O most merciful God! Be thou my morning and my soul's beautiful evening! Shine thou in upon my steps, and grant that I keep close rank and file with those who have washed their robes and made them white

in the blood of the Lamb; and whose pilgrim feet make haste to touch the chilling waters that forever roll between this and the far-off land of better friends, better light, and better love!

May 19, 1870. — Mortara has been to see me once more, and oh! how good and noble he is! All up and down the city he has sought out widows and orphans, the old and the young, and poured into their laps the golden fruits of his toils, making rich amends to those who suffered by his own losses in Texas a quarter of a century ago. To my poor heart, too, he has given back its wasted years, its broken sighs, and its unanswered voices, covering all with that lofty praise which fans the flame whence springs the light of all true glory — a just pride in one's own soul.

After counting over the thousand and one heartaches his friendship has cost me, chiding himself for this and blaming himself for that; naming each and every disappointment and sorrow, as though he too knew them all by heart, he said: —

"When Heaven laid in the grave all that you loved and clouded over the sky of your young life, it still left you peace of mind, which I most cruelly destroyed. I wooed you to forget your promise to the dead. I won your heart and sought your hand; and then, because of a change in my circumstances, I purposely chilled you until, divining my intent, all too nobly you

made me free. If I had not loved you before I surely loved you then, but a sense of obligation to the members of my bereaved family in Europe triumphed and I went away. Not to be happy, though; — no, God forbid! Your image haunted me constantly, and as constantly you were present with me in my thoughts. I knew that I had left you to sacrifice yourself to what I deemed a vague superstition, or at best a mistaken sense of duty; and if your angels could speak they would tell you with what solicitude I followed you in your wanderings until the two years I was to wait for you had elapsed, and then I wrote you, claiming you still, — just as though I had never been selfish enough to accept the freedom that you so loftily cast at my feet.

"But you know the rest. Thrice I amassed a fortune and was on the eve of returning, and thrice I lost it. The unseen hands that led you so gently were against me, and whatever surprise I planned for you or whatever castles I built, all alike went to the ground. But that was no excuse for my ceasing to write you, nor had I any right to take umbrage at your declining to meet me half way. You awaited my return, and knowing that you did I married another. You have not gone unavenged, though; and now, when my head has grown gray with years, I have come far out of my way to ask your forgiveness. Broken pledges make a hard pillow; but oh! only say that neither you nor

your angels have aught laid up in your hearts against me that you do not or cannot forgive, and I shall go away a much happier man than when I came. I say your angels, for I have come to believe in them almost as much as I do in you. And since — by its war — your country has ignored gold, and all its money has become so worthless and green, I cannot help having some faith in your *vision* also. On opening the first package of it that was sent out to us, I exclaimed: —

"'Pray, what dark green stuff is this?' when, either by the association of the words or because anything from America always reminded me of you, my thoughts instantly reverted to the 'gloomy old pillar,' the disappearance of the gold, and the dark green substitute coming in its stead. And so now, you see, in addition to all the rest I have the doubts I used to entertain of your *vision* to ask your pardon for also; for of course you believe in it still, as well as you might after having lived through so many of its scenes, even to the lonely wanderings that I once thought so impossible.

"Truly, that mysterious agency in human affairs that we call Providence has dealt strangely enough with you; but stranger still has been the wonderful tenacity with which you have clung to its guidance, never doubting, never turning to the right nor to the left, but on, on to the end.

"Twenty years ago, when walking among the trees by the Bay and you first told me of the wandering life you were to lead, and that it had all been foreshadowed to you in a *vision*, I almost doubted your sanity, for, remember, you had not even written the little book then, nor had you so much as dreamed of ever publishing one, as I knew. Not light enough even to walk by yourself; no friends, no money, young, timid, and unsophisticated as a child, what wonder that I was puzzled to comprehend how such extensive travels or endless wanderings were to be accomplished?

"You believed, though, and trusted on all the same, and talked of your eventful past and your yet more eventful future in your own sweet musical way, until I began to feel that it would not be a very unpleasant thing to travel or wander with you, and so proposed to become your escort for life.

"Your good angels had you in charge, though, and it is only just to say that you have been the noblest and most self-sacrificing woman who has ever lived; and if I had my way, the world should build a little Mecca around your tomb when you are gone, and make pilgrimages to it to the end of time.

"But come," he said, looking at his watch, "the time is short, and I do all the talking this morning. Am I not to hear from your lips before I go that you have crowned all by forgiv-

ing me everything, and that you still intend to find me away in that beautiful land of souls beyond the grave that you used to write me so much about, and which you and your letters have done more to make me believe in than even Moses and the prophets?"

I strove to reply, but ere the words grew audible too long pent-up feeling dissolved them to tears that, raining down over the two dear hands holding mine, baptized them with something more than forgiveness. They told plainer than any words could tell, of the love still forever burning in my soul; and then once, only once, he whispered my name, coupled it with: —

"God bless you!" and again I was alone in the world, alone, alone, alone, until the very loneliness frosted my heart pale and blanched the world too desolate to endure.

May 20, 1870. — Mortara has sailed; gone, gone, forever and forever gone! Hope is gone. Youth is gone. Life is gone. The sun rises no more. The moon has left the sky, and the stars have forgotten their places. The friends that were have passed away, and there is no more anything left in the world to wait for or to watch for save the closing scene of the *vision*, in which, wherever it be, in this world or the next, through the radiance beaming above and around me my dazzled eyes will turn to look on him.

Verily, the *to be* foreshadows itself; and how real and how eternal his presence in that mystic

scene broke over my soul again, even to the downcast eyes, when he said: —

"The shadows that have so long clouded your morning have begun already to darken my sky, and the day is not so bright to me as it was."

Oh, thus even our lives are one, our destinies one, our souls one. We are one, and one we shall at last be in God's great home of love, where all bereavements are healed and the jostled asunder in this world forever united. Ah! there how passing sweet 't will be to live and love him and have him thus ever by my side, all blest and holy, no sweeter voice to lure him and no brighter smile to make him forget; his lips love's rosy fountains, and the glances of his eyes the sunny rivulets of poesy, and his voice like the murmur of the waters, coming to me ever, ever, ever, mingling with my soul's song by day and melting into music the dreams of my thoughts by night!

Thus love annihilates death even, blots away all record of time, and creates the world it lives in; conjures back arms to embrace, lips to kiss, and eyes to smile; whispers its own praises and breathes its own names of endearment.

. . . . . .

But oh! the lost are not all lost while in visions of hope and fancy we may thus call them back, and in their shining presence relive each glowing scene, relight each waning glance, and retouch each fading memory.

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